Jackson Weech - India

Hello, my name is Jackson Weech, and my country of study is India. India has had an incredibly complicated history with polio, with the nation being seen for decades as potentially impossible to fully eradicate polio within. In the 1970s to 1980s, polio was hyperendemic in India, with 200,000 to 400,000 cases per year. But starting in 1978 with India's national immunization program, the oral polio vaccine was spread across the nation.

Over the course of multiple decades, India was scoured and systematically vaccinated to completely eliminate polio. On January 13, 2011, six-year-old Rukhsar Khatoon suffered the last recorded wild polio case, with the World Health Organization removing India from its list of polio endemic countries in February 2012, and on March 27, 2014, officially certifying India and the rest of the Southeast Asia region as polio-free.

This is particularly impressive due to the incredibly complex and impossible landscape of India's geography. As recently as 2009, India represented 60% of all global polio cases, because access to provide vaccines was severely limited due to its mountainous geography. Because vaccines must maintain a temperature between 35° and 46°F, transporting the vaccine and providing it to every last Indian presented a significant challenge.

But across the past few decades, many organizations have come together to stop and eventually eradicate polio in India. Programs like the Pulse Polio program in 1995, the National Polio Surveillance Project between India's government and the World Health Organization in 1997, and the Rotary's PolioPlus program have historically and continually provided vaccinations and monitoring for the eradication of polio.

Although polio has been entirely eradicated in India with no wild cases since 2014, nearby countries like Afghanistan and Pakistan pose a risk for polio to jump across the border. India continues to focus on vaccinating children in high-risk areas, surveying the nation for potential cases of polio, and reducing migrant risk by requiring that travelers from polio-endemic and re-infected nations receive an oral polio vaccine.